

REVIEWS

Birds in New Zealand. Ed. by C. J. R. Robertson. Pp. 135, 68 illus. (8 colour). Wellington, &c., A. H. & A. W. Reed. 1974. \$2.95.

In this handy volume, one of a series designed by the publishers for overseas tourists, are chapters on habitats, relationships between birds and man, birds of various habitats, extinct and rare birds and conservation. Chapters are contributed by experts in their own fields, nine in all, and while there may be little new information, one may assume that it is up to date and accurate. As a series of essays on bird lore of a wide range but excluding taxonomy and population dynamics and indeed current research (which could well be added in a new edition) it makes interesting reading.

A recurrent theme of most authors is that of conservation, in particular the importance placed on conservation of habitat which after all is the most vital requirement of healthy bird populations. One may detect some dissatisfaction with New Zealand's official approach to conservation: e.g. "If it is granted that the South Cape saddlebacks really were threatened, the species has certainly been saved." And how true is the concern that "It is not inconceivable that Pipits . . . could be the rare birds of tomorrow" (they may be already, see Stidolph in *Notornis* 21 (1): 79).

The illustrations, while mostly well known prints, are well selected — the mutton bird flock on p. 54 will astound tourists — but the publishers, by their method of reproduction, have done a disservice to the reputation of New Zealand photographers and ornithology.

J. M. C.



This small book contains eight essays on New Zealand birds with particular reference to ecological factors affecting their distribution, abundance and future survival. Each section is written by an expert on his chosen topic and each provides a succinct, up-to-date account of present knowledge. The canvas is wide and, sensibly, the introduced species so dominant over much of our agricultural land are not ignored. The chapters deal with habitats, birds and their effects on man and his activities, wading birds, mountain birds, extinct birds, sea-birds and conservation.

The information is accurate and considering that each section is from a different pen and viewpoint there is little duplication of information. There is a very short bibliography but no index.

The numerous black and white photographs are good, relevant and include both familiar examples of K. & J. Bigwood and more

recent studies mainly from members of the Wildlife Service. The colour photographs are less successful, the whites in my copy having acquired a pinkish tinge in printing.

For those requiring a concise survey of the condition of birds in modern New Zealand this book is thoroughly recommended.

J. W.

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This book is not an identification guide, but a collection of essays by some of our most experienced ornithologists. I. A. E. Atkinson writes on the importance of bird habitats, emphasising the need for conserving them. R. B. Sibson discusses our unique forest and mountain birds, viewing them by regions throughout New Zealand, while P. C. Bull describes the relationship between birds and man, expounding the major ecological changes that have taken place. Gamebirds and their histories are presented by T. A. Caithness. H. R. McKenzie summarises information on our indigenous and migratory waders, while F. C. Kinsky and C. J. R. Robertson relate New Zealand's oceanic position to the host of seabirds frequenting the adjacent seas. Extinct species, and those in danger of extinction are enumerated by D. G. Medway, while Sir Robert Falla unifies and emphasises the themes of the previous essays with a chapter on rare birds and conservation.

This volume contains a wealth of material useful both to the new chum and the naturalist of wider experience. However, some statements raise queries: there is reference to nine breeding species of Terns, and three stragglers found in the New Zealand region — where are the three arctic migrants? But details such as these are noticed only by the very critical reader.

Unfortunately, there are lapses in the reproduction, both of plates and of text, some colour plates especially being badly out of register and some lines of text being merely hinted at. Despite this, it is enlightening to see several fresh photographs, previously unpublished in popular works on New Zealand ornithology.

An index might have been a helpful addition. However, these are insignificant drawbacks when one considers the diversity of essential background information, from which one can gain new ideas.

This compact little volume most certainly deserves a place in the bookshelves of all who appreciate our natural history, and who are seeking more information with a view to its preservation.

T. G. L.

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The Dictionary of Birds in Colour, by Bruce Campbell. London: Michael Joseph. 352 pp., 1008 col. illus. NZ \$13.10.

The bulk of this large book consists of well-produced colour photographs. It aims to be a picture dictionary of birds and nearly one eighth of the world's birds are illustrated. There is also a substantial text summarising the main characteristics of birds, their classification and anatomy, followed by succinct diagnoses of each